Check for updates

Simulation & Gaming
2019, Vol. 50(3) 408–410
© The Author(s) 2019
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/1046878119863248
journals.sagepub.com/home/sag
SAGE

Obituary for Allan G. Feldt: Pioneer in Urban Gaming and Co-Founder of the International Simulation and Gaming Association (ISAGA)

Willy C. Kriz, Timothy C. Clapper, and J. Tuomas Harviainen

Photo of the late Allan G. Feldt (from a video interview with W. Kriz, 2013).

The paragraph below cites in part the obituary that Al himself wrote shortly before his death (*published in Ann Arbor News on Mar. 3, 2019*).

Allan Gunnar Feldt (4/20/1932 - 2/27/2019) died in February at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Al was born and raised in Tonawanda, New York, where he graduated from high school in 1950. He graduated at the University of Michigan with a BS degree in Physics. He married his high school sweetheart, Barbara McVittie the same year and was also drafted into the U.S. Army where he served as a radio operator and jeep driver for the 3d Infantry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. Returning to Ann Arbor, he entered graduate school in 1957 and received a PhD in Sociology in 1963 with specializations in Human Ecology and Demography. His first professional appointment was at Cornell University where he was an Assistant Professor of Sociology and of City and Regional Planning. While at Cornell he also served on the

Ithaca Planning Commission for two years. He accepted an appointment as Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Michigan in 1971 and continued as a full Professor until his retirement in 1994. During his years at Michigan he served as Chairman of both the PhD program in Urban, Technological and Environmental Planning and the Master's program in Urban Planning. He served four years on the Ann Arbor Planning Commission. Professor Feldt received several awards for teaching, including the prestigious Urban Planning Educator of the year award in 1995 from the American Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSAP). During his academic career, Al published a few dozen papers. He is best known, however, for his development of one of the earliest simulation games on urban growth and development, CLUG, the Community Land Use Game. This game was widely used in many universities and colleges throughout the United States and Europe as well as many other parts of the world from 1966 through 1990.

As noted, Professor Feldt led a rewarding teaching career. His wife's declining health required that he reduced his appointment to half time in 1989, and he retired in 1994, a year after her death. During the first 12 years of his retirement Allan was a volunteer driver for senior citizens, providing transportation to medical appointments. As his own hearing failed, he became active as a volunteer consultant and advisor to seniors suffering hearing loss, publishing a book on this subject in 2012. His son, David, who was also active in simulation and gaming circles, died in 2012 after an illness. Allan lived in Ann Arbor with his dear friend and companion of 20 years, Kathy West. He especially loved his grandchildren and his daughters.

Allan worked with Gaming Simulation for over 50 years (e.g. Feldt, 1995, 2014a, 2014b) His main foci of interest were urban development games and the use of gaming as tool for communication and teaching. In Michigan, Allan worked closely with Richard D. Duke for a number of years. In 1970 Allan Feldt, Richard Duke and Hans Hansen organized the first conference of ISAGA – the International Simulation and Gaming Association (in Bad Godesberg, Germany) and established this international Association (e.g. see early activities report in Feldt, 1972b). Within ISAGA, there is now a reconstruction of his famous CLUG game underway (cf. Dandekar & Feldt, 1984; Feldt, 1965, 1972a). This classic game inspired generations of game designers and led to many other games in various scientific disciplines, areas of application and even well-known entertainment video-computer games like SIMCITY.

Allan saw methods of Gaming Simulation as the most effective way of communication and therefore used gaming as form of experiential learning in his classes on urban planning (e.g. Moses & Feldt, 1973). However, he also was concerned with ethical questions and negative consequences related to the use of gaming (e.g. addiction, hurting emotions, manipulation with games). In an interview with Willy Kriz in 2013. he was asked for a message to the future generations of game designers. We would like to quote and conclude this obituary with his own words of wisdom. In the interview, Allan argued that gaming is powerful, because it teaches by experience. At the same time, he conveyed a warning based on the same aspect too:

"But the danger is: it teaches by experience. People are not capable of disbelieving things that happened to them. They believe implicitly `it must be true, because it

happened to me'. Games can be designed to lie, and they give false experience. We must be vigilant in protecting this from happening … Debriefing is important, by an honest debriefer. I know some well-intentioned professors who believe so strongly in what they are teaching that they lie even when they are not thinking that they are lying. They say things that are not true. For example, Marxists do this. They teach Marxism as sociology, but not all of Marx's ideas are true. But they do it with the best of intentions … You have to limit complexity for effective teaching through gaming … but you can misrepresent". (Personal communication, Kriz, 2013).

Increasingly we live in times of fake news and realize the attempts of stakeholders to use media in order to manipulate information and moods and to gain control in our societies. We should be aware of the positive and negative potential of gaming as a powerful media for communicating, learning, and persuading. May we remember Allan's warning and try our best to use gaming in a responsible and reflexive way. Thank you Allan, for your great contributions in gaming, brilliant ideas, trendsetting games, your interest and always supporting and coaching attitude to your students and colleagues, your humor, empathy and your ethical conscience.

References

Dandekar, H., & Feldt, A. G. (1984). Simulation/gaming in third world development planning. *Simulation & Games*, *15*, 297-304.

Feldt, A. G. (1965). *CLUG: The Cornell land use game*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.

Feldt, A. G. (1972a). *CLUG: Community land use game*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Feldt, A. G. (1972b). Developments in the field of (simulation and) gaming in the United States. In H. A. Becker & H. M. Goudappel (Eds.), *Developments in simulation and gaming* (pp. 111-124). Meppel, The Netherlands: Boom.

Feldt, A. G. (1995). Thirty-five years in gaming. *Simulation & Gaming*, *26*, 448-452.

Feldt, A. G. (2014a). Duke, Feldt, and simulation/games, 1964-1977. In R. D. Duke & W. C. Kriz (Eds.), *Back to the future of gaming* (pp. 258-261). Bielefeld, Germany: wbv.

Feldt, A. G. (2014b). Experience with simulation/gaming: 1960-2010. *Simulation & Gaming*, *45*, 283-305.

Kriz, W. C. (2013). Interview with Allan Feldt. Ann Arbor.

Moses, D., & Feldt, A. G. (1973). *WALRUS: Water and land resource utilization simulation*. University of Michigan Sea Grant Program.